

Differentiating Slaves from Wives in Ancient Athens by Social Death

Research Thesis

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by

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is about how one differentiates slaves from wives in ancient Athens. Problems begin to arise with how one defines slavery. The Athenian legal code determines that slaves are property within a household. However, by using the definition of property to define slavery, it appears that the wife of an Athenian citizen could also be described as a slave because she is considered to be owned by her husband. Orlando Patterson's social death is a sociological definition for slavery that has three parts: violence, natal alienation, and fundamental dishonor. By using social death to define slavery, the distinction can be made between wives and slaves by accounting for the differences in their power within the hierarchy of the household.

The sources used for this research are from a collection of primary and secondary sources. For secondary sources, *The Cambridge World History of Slavery Volume I: The Ancient Mediterranean World* edited by Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge served as a resource to find other historians who have written about the lives of slaves and the lives of women in the *oikos*. This resource also delivered primary sources, as did *Greek and Roman Slavery* by Thomas Wiedemann. Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* is a model for methodology in discovering that a societal relationship cannot be understood by a legal definition; social dynamics must be taken into consideration as well.

Primary sources were all from the view point of male Athenian citizens from approximately 500-300 BC. The philosophers Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, *Politics*), Plato (*Laws*, *Republic*), and Xenophon (*Oeconomicus*, *Memorabilia*) wrote handbooks to suggest how the Athenian citizen should live their everyday life and interact with each other. The philosophers gave advice on how to run a household and how to reward, punish, and motivate a slave. The

orators Antiphon (*On the Murder of Herodes*), Demosthenes (*Against Aphobus*, *Against Evergus and Mnesibulus*, *Against Nicostratus*, *Against Onetor*), and Lysias (*On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, *Defense in the Matter of the Olive Stump*) depicted the interactions between Athenian citizens and slaves. The accounts from the orators were from a court case, so the interactions they described actually took place. These cases allow the modern reader to see accurate interactions of slave and free in ancient Greece. Herodotus, a historian, wrote *Histories* to provide an inquiry into what caused the Greco-Persian wars. He allows us to see how slaves were used by their masters through the accounts he provides. Playwrights such as Aeschylus (*Orestia*), Aristophanes (*Clouds*), Euripides (*Hippolytus*), and Sophocles (*Antigone*) used slaves as stock characters. Since slaves were a part of everyday life, they had to be included in the plays, but the slave would either be a background character or stereotyped to fit the genre of the play. Tragedies like *Hippolytus* reveal the destruction a slave can create by interfering with their master's life, while the slaves in comedies like *Clouds* make fun of their annoying habits, such as snoring. The primary sources are essential because they provide a first-hand account of what life was like in ancient Athens, and what Athenians wanted life to be like.

## II. Methodological Concerns

There are some severe limitations in the research of the household life of a wife and of slaves. There is only scattered and brief evidence that details the daily life of these two groups of people in Athens, and most of the sources of information written are prescriptive. The playwrights and philosophers of ancient Athens wrote about how they believed a wife or a slave behaved, but the writers do not portray what actually occurred. Since the sources were written from the male master point of view, these writings do not accurately describe how a slave or wife

lived in Athens. As there are no autobiographies of slaves or wives, a case study could not be conducted. The discussion of their life in the household can only be inferred from sources not originating from them.

Most modern historians tend to define slavery by property and ownership, such as Peter Garnsey, J. K. Ingram, and H. J. Nieboer.<sup>1</sup> Ownership in antiquity is more of a Roman legal category- *dominium*, or absolute power- than an Athenian one. When the word *dominium* first appeared in the third century B.C., it meant slave owner. With the development of Roman society and economy, this word evolved into absolute control over an object, and slavery became defined to be a person subject to *dominium*.<sup>2</sup> Modern scholars applying this definition of property run into methodological problems: People who would not be viewed as slaves can be interpreted to be a slave; they are subject to absolute power of another. For example, before the Curt Flood Supreme Court Case in 1970 athletes could be bought and sold to other proprietors against their will. Curt Flood was a baseball player for the St. Louis Cardinals who was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies following the 1969 season. *Flood v. Kuhn* had Curt Flood accusing Major League Baseball of violating the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (barring slavery and involuntary servitude) because Flood was bound to his contract and a team for life. Curt Flood wanted to have the option of free agency; he did not want to be traded to another team without his consent. This brought attention that when a “sale of contract” was completed to trade a baseball player, it was really the player’s body and services that were sold, just like a slave.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, by the property definition, people who are not traditionally considered to be slaves can be interpreted to be one. Property can be defined as “(1) the object, (2) the web of social relations, which

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<sup>1</sup> Morris (2011): 176.

Patterson (1982): 21.

<sup>2</sup> Patterson (1982): 29-32.

<sup>3</sup> Patterson (1982): 25.

establishes a limiting and defined relationship between persons with respect to the object.”<sup>4</sup> This means that any tangible or intangible item can be determined as property if it is owned by a person. The definition of property then applies to slavery by examining the degree of control or power that the owner has over a tangible thing. In this case, a “thing” is a human being.

Orlando Patterson, a sociologist in the 1980s, offers a way out of this methodological problem. He disagrees that slaves should be viewed as property “since it does not specify any distinct category of persons. Proprietary claims and powers are made with respect to many persons who are clearly not slaves.”<sup>5</sup> Historians move to a “pro-property” position to argue that “The property aspect of slavery must be accepted as primary- this is what distinguishes slavery from all other forms of dependency and involuntary labour.”<sup>6</sup> This argument eliminates defining serf or other forms of labor as slavery, as they are not the legal, absolute property of their master. While defining slavery as property is understandable, it is a poor methodology choice because people who are not considered slaves can be viewed as a slave under this definition.

Orlando Patterson argues that the legal (property) definition of slavery does not properly describe the relationship of a slave to his master. He builds on the anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, a twentieth century anthropologist who believed that social relationships cannot be defined from law codes.<sup>7</sup> Law codes are inaccurate in describing social relationships because the law codes prescribe the ideal situation for a social relationship created by the lawmakers. However, the laws do not necessarily describe what actually happens in society. Not all law codes may be enforced, and especially when it comes to social relationships, as people tend to

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<sup>4</sup> Patterson (1982): 20.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson (1982): 21-23.

<sup>6</sup> Patterson (1982): 21.

<sup>7</sup> Patterson (1982): 19-20.

treat others through a combination of what the law dictates and their personal opinions as well. Patterson's distinction between law and jurisprudence is important to studying slavery because jurisprudence allows for traditions and features caused by nature to shape the law. The question becomes not what are the rules, but what is the practice? Based off of the definition of property, the main problem is that in ancient Athens a wife would also be considered as a "slave" to the male head of the household. Wives and slaves in ancient Athens were categorized quite similarly and worked comparable jobs within the household. They were both considered to be property of the master, and both had a lower position than the master within the household hierarchy. They were both received into the household with the exchange of money. Since wives and slaves had the ability to be bought and sold, they were considered to be chattel. Through these definitions and law codes, wives and slaves were analogous in ancient Athenian society. However, a detailed examination of the ancient sources shows that a wife's role in the household hierarchy was not analogous to that of a slave because the woman had agency within the household and a slave did not. A woman was positioned in the middle of the household hierarchy due to her ability to manage a household and watch over the slaves, and her dowry gave her the ability to have an opinion in household matters. A slave was viewed as a living tool within the household; the slave existed solely to provide work for the master. Due to the wife's agency and therefore authority in the household, she held a position not analogous to that of slaves.

Patterson defines slavery through "social death;" this new definition offers a more helpful distinction between slaves and non-slaves. Social death is comprised of "Permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons."<sup>8</sup> The permanence of slavery meant that a slave and her offspring were bound to the master. Slaves would be purchased and

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<sup>8</sup> Patterson (1982): 13.

then frequently used until the slave's death. If the master passed away, then the master's son would inherit his father's property, including the slaves. The master could choose to manumit, or free his slave, but this did not happen often in ancient Athens. A slave would also endure extreme violence; it was socially acceptable for a master to beat his slaves. "Proper" violence towards slaves was encouraged even in handbooks to ensure that a slave would complete assignments properly and without causing any problems for the family. The ancient ideology required violence to instill fear in the slave, which gave the master more power. A slave also was forcibly alienated from former family and kinship ties. The slave would be forced to learn a new language, receive a new name, and live in solidarity with strangers. A slave was stripped from any ties to his or her previous home, and was only permitted the existence that a master created. The master destroyed any resemblances of the slave's home and previous life. The master also exploited his power to dishonor the slave; slave dishonor ultimately brings the master honor. These three elements combined bring social death to the slave. The ritual enslavement a slave goes through, "The symbolic humiliating rejection of his past and kinsmen, change of name, imposition of some visible mark of servitude, and assumption of new status in the household," forces the slave to have no social existence outside of his master.<sup>9</sup> The slaves went through what anthropologists such as Arnold Van Gennep call a "rite of passage," where a person experiences "ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another."<sup>10</sup> The slave is transitioned from his or her life of freedom to his or her new life as a slave, by means of social death. Social death is a dynamic relationship of power and violence that denies a slave anything resembling a life outside of servitude.

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<sup>9</sup> Patterson (1982): 52.

<sup>10</sup> Van Gennep (1960): 10



This paper uses Patterson's sociological model of "social death" to argue that ancient ideologies of slavery were about much more than just property concerns, but a matter of honor and control. The master ensures that his slaves endure social death in order to strengthen his power and rule within the household hierarchy. The slave's "alienation from all ties of natality and their lack of honor and publicly recognized reputation" allows the master to assert his absolute power.<sup>11</sup> Power relationships were of utmost importance to a male Athenian because he needed to have control over all aspects of his life in order to hold status. Ancient Greeks were obsessed with power and honor; Aristotle describes *hubris* in *Rhetoric* as "doing and saying things that cause shame to the victim...simply for the pleasure of it. Retaliation is not *hubris*, but revenge... Young men and the rich are *hubristic* because they think they are better than other people."<sup>12</sup> Aristotle recognized that people felt more honorable and powerful if they made others less honorable. Sophocles' *Antigone* has Creon dishonoring Polyneices by refusing to bury him because Polyneices fought in a war on the opposing side of Creon:

"Has not Creon destined our brothers, the one to honored burial, the other to unburied shame? Eteocles, they say, with due observance of right and custom, he has laid in the earth for his honor among the dead below. As for the poor corpse of Polyneices, however, they say that an edict has been published to the townsmen that no one shall bury him or mourn him, but instead leave him unwept, unentombed, for the birds a pleasing store as they look to satisfy their hunger."<sup>13</sup>

Here, Creon is asserting his power as king over his subjects, and is using this power to strengthen and demonstrate this authority. A king and a master would use *hubris* to help their social situation in gaining honor and control. They would dishonor slaves because dishonoring

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<sup>11</sup> Patterson (1982): 26.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*; 1378b, 23-30.

<sup>13</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*; 21-38.

someone else makes non-slaves more honorable.<sup>14</sup> A master would go receiving his honor by putting his slave through a process: the slave would be “uprooted, desocialized, depersonalized, and then introduced to the community by his master,” and this introduction would finalize the slave’s position as a non-being in the eyes of the ancient Athenians.<sup>15</sup> By continually enforcing this process, the master strengthens his absolute power of control within the household.

### III. Potential Objections to This Study

Critics of Patterson’s *Slavery and Social Death* have mixed opinions about his method to define slavery. Many found flaws or holes in his arguments, and felt that many of his claims were too broad. Stefano Fenoaltea for *The Journal of Economic History* argues that Patterson’s chapter on slavery and notion of property is “uncharacteristically weak,” and his arguments are not all-encompassing of every slave society.<sup>16</sup> *Contemporary Sociology*’s review by Stuart Schwartz notes that Patterson “seeks continuities and broad universal definitions” to support his claims.<sup>17</sup> These claims are broad, and do not have enough evidence to back them up, and despite these weaknesses, the reader is expected to believe whatever Patterson tells them to be true. This critic argues that Patterson’s generalities and gaps in information support his theory, but a closer inspection would probably not allow the argument of social death to be supported. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*’s Paul Finkelman was disappointed that Patterson failed to produce a theory that explains all slavery at all times due to a lack of understanding the difference between proprietary claims and property, which Finkelman believes undermines the argument of the

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<sup>14</sup> Patterson (1982): 87.

<sup>15</sup> Patterson (1982): 38.

<sup>16</sup> Fenoaltea (1986): 586.

<sup>17</sup> Schwartz (1986): 357.

book.<sup>18</sup> These critiques of *Slavery and Social Death* demonstrates that the idea behind defining slavery may not be fully developed, but the methodology of thinking about slavery in different perspectives, such as sociological, is important to gain a better understanding of a historical phenomenon. This paper will test the criticism that defining slavery by social death is too broad of a definition for slavery by applying this concept to slavery in ancient Athens. If social death applies to slavery in antiquity, then social death will be helpful for understanding classical literature.

#### IV. The Status of Women in the Athenian Household (*oikos*)

The life of a wife of an Athenian citizen can be examined to realize that she did not undergo social death, which allowed her a role of higher status than a slave within the household. The wife of the master did not have to go through the same humiliation as a slave did. She still had ties to her natal household; often her natal *oikos* and marriage *oikos* would have strong ties together. She also was not supposed to be treated as violently or humiliated because this could give her reasons to either initiate a divorce, or worse, she could begin an affair, which would bring ultimate dishonor upon the *oikos*. One similarity to slaves is that the wife would experience a change of identity. She would receive a new family name that tied her to her husband's household, but her personal name remained the same. The male head-of-household also had to allow the woman some power within the household due to her dowry size. Since the woman had the option of divorce, she retained a position of choice in the household hierarchy, which protected her against social death. The woman's own authority and choice caused her not to undergo social death.

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<sup>18</sup> Finkelman (1986): 508-510.

The *oikos* is defined in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* to be "a man's property or everything he possesses that increases his wealth."<sup>19</sup> By this definition, the *oikos* refers to people related to each other, and any property that was owned, which includes slaves, movable and immovable objects.<sup>20</sup> The relationships that formed the *oikos* could arise from blood relation, marriage, or adoption. These bonds helped form the *oikos*, but also permitted multiple *oikoi* to overlap. It is notable that the *oikos* is considered to be permanent, while the members are not.<sup>21</sup> The *oikos* would be considered to be the closest word in ancient Greek to our idea of "family," but our word "family" did not exist in the Greek language and culture. The household had a hierarchical structure centered on the male adult. The adult male had the authority within the household, he "rules his wife with the authority of an official in a Greek city (except this office does not rotate), and his children like a king (by virtue of seniority and bonds of affection). But his authority over the household's slaves is absolute."<sup>22</sup> The male Athenian's mode of leadership was "tyrannical" in an otherwise democratic society. The relationships formed were hierarchic: husband-wife, parent-child, owner-slave. The master of the house had the authority to determine who could be allowed into the house: he made decisions for marriages, purchased slaves, and also determined whether to accept or expose a child.<sup>23</sup> The master had the privilege of controlling everyone and everything within the *oikos*.

The *oikos* was a very significant ancient Greek institution. Not because not only was it the formation of people's everyday life, but the *oikos* formed the basis of Athenian society. The *polis* of Athens was a collection of *oikoi*. The *oikos* dominated the economy of the Greek city-

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<sup>19</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*; trans. Pomeroy 1994: 105.

<sup>20</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 21.

<sup>21</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 23.

<sup>22</sup> Golden (2011): 137.

<sup>23</sup> Cox (1998): 133.

states which were less market economies and more household-based economies.<sup>24</sup> The households were the centers of production. Many households would use these sales as their main source of income, and used the front of their homes as their shop, which the adult male of the household ran.<sup>25</sup> The Athenian state was a collection of small household economies that operated at the subsistence level.

The priority of the *oikos* was obviously to perpetuate the *oikos*. A marriage was formed with the “primary goal of producing children and maintaining the identity of the *oikos* unit within the social and political community.”<sup>26</sup> The master of the *oikos* wanted to maintain/increase his wealth, and to have an heir. With an heir, the continuity of the *oikos* would be ensured.<sup>27</sup> The master of the *oikos* was also extremely concerned with his reputation in society, as well as the reputations of the other members of the *oikos*. Subordinates within an *oikos* had to follow the male ideologies of the household; everyone was expected to perform specific tasks and behave appropriately in society. Male honor depended on whether the householder successfully exercised authority. If the members of the *oikos* are doing dishonorable things that could damage/lessen the entire *oikos*, this caused internal friction, and destroyed reputations. For example, marriages in Athens were arranged; the girl, around age 14, was supposed to marry a man in his 30s of suitable family, and an *oikos* with a reputation of dishonor would be considered to have a lower status.<sup>28</sup> Honor was of utmost importance to an *oikos*.

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<sup>24</sup> Cohen (2000): 37.

<sup>25</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 30-31.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen (2000): 39.

<sup>27</sup> Nevett (2005): 15.

<sup>28</sup> Cox (1998): 70.

## V. The Status of Slaves in the Athenian Household

Slaves were looked down upon in households; they were dehumanized and even animalized. The slave was viewed as a moral inferior. Aristotle defined slaves as property and viewed them as “living tools.” He claims slaves are living tools because tools are needed to live, tools are property, slaves are animate property, therefore slaves must be living tools that provide work functions for their masters. He describes the functions of the slave as:

“A: A human being who by nature does not belong to himself but to another person- such a one by nature is a slave. B: A human being belongs to another when he is a piece of property as well as being human. C: A piece of property is a tool which is used to assist some activity, and which has a separate existence of its own.”<sup>29</sup>

This view of a slave being equivalent to a tool lowers the status of the slave from being a member within the *oikos*, to being an just object of value within the *oikos*.

Slaves were animalized as the head of the household used animal training methods to get slaves to do their work and behave appropriately. Handbooks urged a master to create a reward system for motivating slaves. Xenophon, for example, describes how a master would often provide items by matching the quality of items and quality of work the slave did: “I don’t make the cloaks and shoes which I have to provide for my workers all alike, but some worse and others of better quality, so I can reward the better worker with better clothing and shoes, and I give the worse to the man who is worse.”<sup>30</sup> In this scenario, the master knew that his hard-working slaves would become demoralized and would begin to curtail their efforts if they realized that those who put in less effort would reap the same rewards. An incentive was then made to ensure that slaves worked their hardest to gain nicer possessions. Greek masters also treated their slaves like

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<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1, 2; trans. Wiedemann (1981): 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*: 13.9-12; trans. Wiedemann 1981: 185.

animals; their treatment was based on work, punishment, and food. By this basis, slaves could be compelled to do work based off of a system of incentives and punishments.<sup>31</sup> Likening the slave to an animal makes the slave property.

Slaves had negative stereotypes associated with their behaviors. They were proverbially “domestic enemies.” The family had to be watchful of their actions around their slaves; they never knew if the slave would come to their aid or create their demise. Household slaves assisted in the family business along with their regular domestic duties, and therefore knew all interests of family matters. The physical space of a home is very intimate, and a space where slaves would see everything. In a court case described by Demosthenes, a prominent orator in Athens, slaves were witnesses that a specific sale occurred.<sup>32</sup>

“I have this to say: all the slaves of the household know that the plaintiff used to sell these articles. I am ready now, as I was then, to give over to him any one of these slaves whom he may choose to be examined by torture. If then, he alleges that I refuse to surrender the man who has knowledge of the facts, and offer him others who have no such knowledge; he will but show that he ought all the more to have accepted my offer.”

Testimonies of slaves were only admissible in court if it was taken under torture,

“You on your part hold that in both private and public matters the torture is the most certain of all methods of proof, and when slaves and freemen are both available, and the truth of a matter is to be sought out, you make no use of the testimony of the freemen, but seek to ascertain the truth by torturing the slaves; and very properly, men of the jury. For of witnesses who have given testimony there have been some ere now who have been

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<sup>31</sup> Hunter (1994): 163-165.

<sup>32</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Aphobus* 29.38: trans. S. H. Butcher 1907; [perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)

thought not to tell the truth; but of slaves put to the torture no one has ever been convicted of giving false testimony.”<sup>33</sup>

Torture was essential in Athenian court cases; it was a method that would force the truth to come out and to ensure that a slave was not covering the truth for his master. The legal assumption was that slaves naturally lie, so the slave character had to be broken down by torture to deliver the truth. The privacy of a household was minimal: masters “acted as if their house servants had neither eyes nor ears- as if they hardly existed at all... [The slaves] shared in their master’s most unguarded utterances.”<sup>34</sup> In this matter, slaves knew all the family’s secrets, which forced a sense of morality onto the masters, for they feared that if they were involved in any illegal or shameful activities their slave could easily tell the authorities or gossip in public.<sup>35</sup> Some slaves were even forced by one member of the family to keep secrets from another member of that family. For example, a maid would know whether or not her mistress was committing adultery which was an indictable offense. A woman had to trust her servant would maintain discretion and not reveal this offense in public or to her master.<sup>36</sup> An example of this secrecy is shown by the slaves in Aeschylus’ *Orestia*, as they play no role in revealing Clytemnestra’s affair with Aegisthus, her husband’s (Agamemnon) brother. The servants were aware of the affair, but did not reveal any information to Agamemnon upon his return.<sup>37</sup> The master feared the slave’s knowledge, because if the slave used household information to gain power within the household, it would destroy the master’s authority within the household, so the slave was viewed as the “domestic enemy.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gagarin (1996): 1.

Demosthenes, *Against Onetor* 30.37: trans. A. T. Murray 1939; perseus.tufts.edu

<sup>34</sup> Hunter (1994): 83.

<sup>35</sup> Lysias, *Defense in the Matter of the Olive Stump* 7.16; trans. W. R. M. Lamb 1930; perseus.tufts.edu

<sup>36</sup> Hunter (1994): 72.

<sup>37</sup> Aeschylus, *Orestia*.

<sup>38</sup> Harrill (2006): 146.



Slaves knew everything that occurred within the household, which caused the family to be very cautious around the slaves.

The family seemed to show signs of care and support for their slaves, but they usually had another reason for their actions. When slaves became ill, it was the duty of the wife of the householder to care for them, and call a doctor if the illness escalated, as prescribed by the philosopher Xenophon: “You will certainly have to be concerned about nursing any of the slaves who become ill”.<sup>39</sup> Xenophon also portrays how a master wants to ensure that his property is preserved through a conversation between Socrates and Diodoros: “If one of your slaves run away, do you take steps to recover him? ... And if one of your slaves is ill... you look after him and call in physicians to stop him from dying?”<sup>40</sup> The reason for humane treatment is to keep the slave working and to maintain property, similar to animal husbandry. However, doctors cost money; it was likely they were only called when a slave was violently unhealthy. The master’s care for their slave was not as genuine as a modern interpreter would think; a master would care for a sick slave just as he would for a sick animal. The master had paid for the slave/property, and the master would try to preserve his property. Joseph Vogt, a historian, believed that a slave in ancient Greece’s life must have been tolerable, since there were no slave revolts at the time, and there is no evidence in the laws that a slave revolt was a fear.<sup>41</sup> He also notes that the Hippocratic Oath has the physician vowing to “abstain from sexual intercourse with patients be they men or women, free or slave. The medical treatment of slaves must therefore have been a fairly regular occurrence.”<sup>42</sup> However, Vogt is misreading the evidence as “humane slavery;” although there were no slave revolts in a 200 year span, it is possible that slaves were content

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<sup>39</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.37; trans. Pomeroy 1994: 147.

<sup>40</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2, 10; trans. Wiedemann 1981: 181.

<sup>41</sup> Vogt (1975): 5.

<sup>42</sup> Vogt (1975): 14.

and did not feel the need to revolt, but it is more likely that the master wielded his power that a revolt was not even considered to be an option for the slaves. The slave knew it was better for their well-being to follow the master's orders rather than risk the consequences for rebelling. Similarly, the Hippocratic Oath mentioned avoiding sexual relations with slaves does not mean that slaves received medical attention regularly. Physicians treat humans, and in ancient Greece, humans were categorized into male, female, or slave. The Hippocratic Oath wanted to uphold respect for patients, even if the patient was a slave. It is likely that slave patients were unusual because consistent treatment would be costly to the slave's master. Even though families provided some amenities to their slaves, all of these actions were done for the master to establish their authority and to add to the value of the *oikos*.

## VI. Distinguishing Slave and Free

Since the ideology of race was not prevalent in Athenian slavery, like it was in the Southern United States, it was often very difficult to distinguish a slave from a citizen. Greek slavery became more brutal than other cultures where slavery was based on race to distinguish a citizen from a slave. Keith Bradley, a modern historian noted that Roman slavery was not based on race either; Roman citizens distinguished themselves from slaves by animalizing their slaves, even more than the Athenians did.<sup>43</sup> Demosthenes notes in his *Against Nicostratus* that it was against the law to mistake a citizen as a slave:

“They sent... in the daytime a young boy who was an Athenian, and put him up to plucking off the flowers from my rose-bed, in order that, if I caught him and in a fit of

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<sup>43</sup> Bradley (1994)

anger put him in bonds or struck him, assuming him to be a slave, they might bring against me an indictment for assault.”<sup>44</sup>

Based off of the boy’s appearance and youth, it would have been easy to mistake him as a slave.

While Athenian families struggled to make this distinction clear out in society, they had no problems establishing a hierarchy within the household. Families used violence and torture to distinguish family and slaves apart; Xenophon describes an account where Aristippos explains how he gets a misbehaving slave to change his behavior: “I inflict every kind of punishment upon him- said Aristippos- until I can force him to serve properly.”<sup>45</sup> Athenians took active measures to distinguish the free and the slave, typically through violence and punishments. Punishments such as starvation, beatings, and not providing necessities like warm clothes confirm that the slave was not part of the family but property. Even the threat of torture and being sent to work in even more unfavorable conditions, such as a mill or quarry was enough motivation for a slave to act appropriately: “‘So it is open to you [the slave],’ I said, ‘to choose as you please between two things,—either to be whipped and thrown into a mill, and to be irrevocably immersed in that sort of misery, or else to speak out the whole truth and, instead of suffering any harm, obtain my pardon for your transgressions.’”<sup>46</sup> This quotation demonstrates the ancient ideological connection between torture and truth. There are instances of parents beating their children, but these were minor beatings as this form of punishment was done for the good of the child: “‘Did you beat me as a boy? That is now the question.’ ‘Of course I did, in concern for you, a mark of my good will.’”<sup>47</sup> This is from Aristophanes’ comedy *Clouds*, where a father, Strepsiades reveals he beat his son Pheidippides, and Pheidippides uses the logic he

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<sup>44</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Nicostratus* 53.16; trans. N. W DeWitt 1949; perseus.tufts.edu Cox (1998): 190.

<sup>45</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.16-17; trans. Wiedemann 1981: 172-3.

<sup>46</sup> Lysias, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* 1.18; trans. W. R. M. Lamb 1930; perseus.tufts.edu

<sup>47</sup> Aristophanes, *Clouds*; trans. M. Hadas 1962: 138-140.

learned at the Thinkery to make it acceptable for him to beat his father. As a comedy by Aristophanes, this notion of familial beatings is supposed to be absurd and humorous, so the amount parents beat their children may not have been that great. The family would use violence towards the slave as a way to distinguish slaves from family members.

To further distinguish a slave from the rest of the family, the family would alienate the slave in order to keep the slave at a social distance. Plato describes methods to prevent familial bonds with slaves amongst the family, such as the master must speak harshly and only in commands to his slave, and the master should never joke with his slaves, or he will have trouble later: “A lot of people foolishly like to act like this towards their slaves, and by making them conceited they make life much more difficult both for the slaves who have obeyed, and for themselves in managing them.”<sup>48</sup> This advice by Plato is prescriptive; “A lot of people” do not behave properly around their slaves despite what Plato advises. A slave that felt too comfortable around his masters would try to escape his label and requirements of being a slave.

The master had the ability to limit and prevent the slaves from having their own family and prohibit the slave to have solidarity. Most of the following advice is “handbook” literature; it was written to counter common practices. The advice from Plato and Xenophon is the ideal relationship the philosophers wanted between masters and slaves. It was preferred that slaves did not get along with each other. Plato even encouraged that slaves did not socialize with each other at all: “Slaves must not come from the same country of origin, and in it so far as it can be arranged that they do not speak the same language.”<sup>49</sup> Plato’s plan was a divide-and-conquer strategy; if slaves do not understand each other, then they cannot conspire and form solidarity. This plan also helped the master because it allowed him to have more control over his slaves. In

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<sup>48</sup> Plato, *Laws* 6; trans. Wiedemann 1981: 83-84.

<sup>49</sup> Plato, *Laws* 6; trans. Wiedemann 1981: 83

addition to a slave not having their own household, slave families were not legally recognized.<sup>50</sup> Slaves could get married, but these marriages were determined by the master and could be torn apart at any time. Male and female slaves often lived apart; they were separated by both their jobs and their living quarters, so they did not associate. Slave families were formed as a reward and motivator for good behavior, and for breeding purposes. For a slave, relationships, sex, and childbearing were all granted as a reward. A master would have to grant permission for slaves to have a relationship between each other; the master feared that if troublesome slaves mated, then the bad slaves and their children would also be troublesome: “A bolted door... so that the slaves would not breed without our permission. For, generally, honest slaves become more loyal when they have produced children, but when the bad ones mate, they become more troublesome.”<sup>51</sup> Masters would allow some slave relationships to be formed- some permitted marriage ceremonies.<sup>52</sup> Marriage was used as a tool of control by the masters; it was a reward if a slave behaved, but then the master always could threaten to break up the marriage if the slave misbehaved. Slaves had a difficult time forming relationships due to constantly being separated and only allowed to socialize with their master’s permission, but they also lived in constant fear of their family being broken apart by a sale. Greek families bought and sold slaves depending on how much work needed to be done, and whether the family had the finances to support their labor. The household would sometimes use slaves to gain a profit; they would have the slaves reproduce, and once the child was old enough, the child was already a slave and then could be sold. Greek literature on household management urged the master to deny his slaves their own *oikos*, and this action isolated the slaves and segregated them from the rest of the Greek citizens.

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<sup>50</sup> Ogden (1996): 129-130.

<sup>51</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 9.5; trans. Pomeroy 1994: 155.

<sup>52</sup> Ogden (1996): 130-131.

Violence to the human body marked another difference between the slave and the free. Masters were allowed to treat slaves harshly. Based off of law and custom, masters were granted almost complete freedom to treat slaves as violently as they deemed necessary. However, killing slaves was not permitted, due to a taboo against *hubris*. Even if a slave had committed a horrendous crime, such as murdering his master, the slave could not be murdered by the slain master's relatives: "It follows that the slave in question should have had a public trial, instead of being put to death by you without a hearing. Thus it is you who deserve to be on trial far rather than I, who am being accused this day so undeservedly."<sup>53</sup> Ancient Greeks considered murder as taboo that brought on religious pollution. The pollution of murder was considered to be contagious and could affect anyone who came into contact with the murderer, including entire towns.<sup>54</sup> Athenian law had the murderer banished "the water of purification, from libations, from the wine bowls, from the sanctuaries... from sacrifices and contests" as well as being banned from the marketplace and the city.<sup>55</sup> This pollution is referred to as *miasma*, referring to the religious defilement that takes place when a murder takes place.<sup>56</sup> Athenians wanted to avoid catastrophic situations, so it was easiest to not create *miasma* by not killing anyone, including slaves. The Athenians were not concerned with causing damage to a slave, but more concerned with causing damage by polluting themselves. To avoid the possibility of tragedy and destruction, cautions were taken to avoid this pollution.

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<sup>53</sup> Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes 5.48* trans. K. J Maidment 1941. [perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)

<sup>54</sup> Rihll (2011): 52.

Mikalson (1983): 52.

<sup>55</sup> Mikalson (1983): 52.

<sup>56</sup> Parker (1983): 3-7.

## VII. Distinguishing Male and Female

Women had a status in the middle of the household hierarchy located beneath their husbands, but above the status of slaves. Everything within the household has a ruling and ruled element, and within the *oikos* women were both. The women were ruled by their husbands or by the adult male who was in charge of everything regarding the *oikos*. However, women also had the opportunity to rule, as they had managerial control over the *oikos*, and supervised the slaves within the household.<sup>57</sup> The ideal and developed household was considered by Aristotle to be compromised of both slaves and free. Women's status was lowered in the event that the house could not afford slaves; the women and children would have to take on the duties of the slaves.<sup>58</sup> However, women were praised for their contributions to the *oikos*. The women were in charge of the household inventory, ensuring there would be enough clothing and food for the future. A main portion of her duties is to "supervise storage of produce and monitors what is consumed, stores other household items."<sup>59</sup> A wife's work was a necessity to the household functioning properly. Euripides noted "Women order households... nor in the absence of a woman is even the prosperous household well provided for," meaning that no household could function successfully without a woman to run it.<sup>60</sup> The ultimate compliment for a woman was to be described as having "a masculine mind."<sup>61</sup> The wife was honored if she stayed in her place within the hierarchy and did her job, which was the man's way of dishonoring his wife and creating more power for himself.

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<sup>57</sup> Hunt (2011): 41-42

<sup>58</sup> Golden (2011): 136.

<sup>59</sup> Cox (1998): 130.

<sup>60</sup> Cohen (2000): 37.

<sup>61</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 73.

Women were not considered Athenian citizens, as only free males were citizens in Athens. As a non-citizen, women could not vote and lacked direct rights.<sup>62</sup> They were not able to participate in politics, and they usually were not allowed out of the house. Male honor in Athenian society depended on dishonoring women, which was done by excluding women from voting and participating in government. As mentioned before, keeping honor within the *oikos* was very important to the ancient Athenians, so families ensured that their wives and other women within the household did not do anything that could bring shame. Society determined who was viewed as an honorable or dishonorable family, so the family's actions were determined by the public perspective. The husband wanted to tame or subdue his wife to ensure the preservation of the *oikos*. Unsurprisingly, an ancient Greek word for wife, *damar*, also is translated as "to subdue or tame."<sup>63</sup> Athenian men dishonored their wives in order to be more powerful and respected in society.

The wife experienced what the historian Wayne Meeks describes as status inconsistency, "high-status-but-low class," or as a person who is relatively deprived.<sup>64</sup> A wife held a position in the middle of the household hierarchy, had some authority over slaves, but was still denied a public life. Meeks continues that a person of this status feels relatively deprived; they recognize that they are not oppressed, but they will not be neglected or ignored by the people who matter most to them. The Athenian wife experienced these feelings: She identified that she could be oppressed, like her slaves, and the only person who she needed to pay attention to her was her husband. An important difference between male and female was that women had higher experiences of what sociologists call "status inconsistency." A wife was stuck in the middle of the *oikos*' power structure.

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<sup>62</sup> Cohen (2000): 6.

<sup>63</sup> Cohen (2000): xi.

<sup>64</sup> Meeks (1983): 215n20.



Male and female was also differentiated by space. Women were often kept inside of the household because they could not be trusted out in the city. The master of the household often feared that the women in his *oikos* might bring shame to him while out in the city. Men feared that if women worked outside or went into town, other men might try and destroy the *oikos* by either convincing the woman to have an affair or rape her. The ideology of the household would be destroyed if a woman did not maintain her chastity.<sup>65</sup> An additional fear was that if women went out into public, they would gossip with other women about private affairs, similar to the “domestic enemy” *topos* for slaves, and also hurt the reputation of the *oikos*.<sup>66</sup> The solution to avoid these fears was to keep women inside away from outsider eyes. Women were also not allowed to go out in public to go shopping because it seemed that financial transactions were too complicated for a woman to understand.<sup>67</sup> Within the home, women were expected to leave if a male visitor came. Women were kept upstairs or away from the shop while the man was selling items. If outsiders came over to visit or for *symposia*, a male drinking party, the female members would have to withdraw to the upstairs room.<sup>68</sup> It was best to keep a woman within the house because she could then complete her duties of taking care of the household and supervising the slaves without risking her to outsider’s eyes and bad intentions.

The wife and daughters were hidden from the public, but were considered to be valued property of the *oikos*. Athenian households often kept women working inside, as it was a sign of wealth for the women of the house not to be seen. This meant that the male householder could provide adequately for the household and he could afford slave labor to work for the *oikos*. The lack of visibility of the work that women did made their work less valued, because women and

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<sup>65</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 21.

<sup>66</sup> Nevett (2005): 15.

<sup>67</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 72.

<sup>68</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 30.

slaves did jobs that were viewed as beneath the dignity of male citizens.<sup>69</sup> Women were kept indoors as we saw above, to keep them away from the other men; it was feared that a woman would disgrace her *oikos* by becoming a source of gossip or involved in an affair.<sup>70</sup> Gossip would most frequently start with slaves, as they were the ones who went into town and ran errands for the household. The gossip would then spread amongst the slaves and eventually be passed onto the master family. The master would then use this gossip to judge whoever the gossip was about, and could use this gossip to alter that person's social standing within the Athenian community. It was easiest for the household to confine a woman within the household so she could focus on her responsibility of managing the household.

However, based off of economic need, it was likely that not all women remained indoors at all times. Women may have held other jobs to supplement the family income, such as selling produce in markets, working as midwives, wet-nurses, or in agriculture. If a woman's family was poor, she and her children would be required to do the labor that wealthier families had slaves do, since they could not afford an actual slave.<sup>71</sup> Since most of the texts that depict a woman remaining indoors and unseen by the public were written as prescriptive literature, it is possible that women did venture outside more frequently than depicted in the texts, but men preferred the idea of women remaining indoors.

### VIII. Comparing and Contrasting Slaves and Women

The amount of slaves a household had depended on the need of the *oikos*. Oftentimes, at the beginning of a household formation, slaves would be purchased in larger amounts.<sup>72</sup> This

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<sup>69</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 71.

<sup>70</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 21.

<sup>71</sup> Nevett (1999): 16.

<sup>72</sup> Golden (2012): 136.

large purchase of slaves would occur right after a marriage and when children were born. The newlywed's home would require a lot of work to be set up properly, so extra laborers were necessary. The wife would require assistance in the beginning of her managerial duties. The wife was also expected to start bearing children shortly after the marriage, and slaves were needed to be the nurse and take care of the child. Once the household's needs were fulfilled, a family could sell their slaves if they felt they no longer needed or could afford the extra labor. Another solution to avoid selling a slave would be to rent the slaves out to different *oikoi*.<sup>73</sup> This way, the family would be able to retain their property, but would not be burdened with the extra expenses of having their slaves in their home.

Slaves were bought by the master at a slave market. Slaves were brought to the slave market by being taken as a captive of war or kidnapped. Slave traders were known to follow behind armies, hoping to purchase war-captives and then sell these captives to slave markets.<sup>74</sup> Slave traders would also plan raids alongside pirates and then the traders would kidnap people to sell into slavery.<sup>75</sup> These slaves would then be brought into the cities to be sold at a market. The slaves at the market varied by their age, gender, ethnicity, and physicality; these were all features that a potential buyer would consider before purchasing a slave. A slave's purchase price varied depending on the slave's skills and where the slave was acquired. Slaves brought from far away areas were more expensive due to the distance that had to be covered to obtain the slave. Slaves from far away were rare, and their rarity in the market may have made it seem that these slaves were also more talented.<sup>76</sup> Athenians were willing to pay for a slave that they believed would add the most value to their home. A potential slave purchaser would examine the features of the

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<sup>73</sup> Cox (1998): 191

<sup>74</sup> Wrenhaven (2012): 14.

<sup>75</sup> Wrenhaven (2012): 14.

<sup>76</sup> Braund (2011): 123-4.

slaves up for sale to determine who would seem the most capable to handle the work that needed to be done at the *oikos*, while being the good, ideal slave. As the slaves were being examined, the slaves frequently would behave according to whether or not they liked or disliked a prospector, making snap decisions that could help the slave ensure or avoid being purchased.<sup>77</sup> Once a slave was obtained, the slave would experience the ritual enslavement that defined his status as the lowest member of the household hierarchy.

Comparatively, women also had a purchase price: a dowry. The dowry was an exchange of money that occurred before the wife could be integrated into the household. Marriages in Athens were prearranged. The bride had no idea if she was getting a good husband; often her betrothed would be someone she has never met before.<sup>78</sup> There were three steps to the marriage process. First, the bride's father would reach out and make a contract with an adult male that he found to be of an acceptable status and would determine the dowry price. Shortly after, the transference of the dowry would occur. Next, the wedding celebration would follow. This process starts with the sacrifices that would take place at the bride's parents' house. After the sacrifice, a nighttime procession lit with torches would start leaving the bride's natal home and lead her towards the groom's parent's home. The bride would be covered with a veil, and the people in the procession would identify that the bride, who was referred to by her father's name only, was getting married. The bride was never identified herself; she was only identified through her parents. The final step of the marriage was the sexual union and cohabitation of the new couple.<sup>79</sup> A couple was then officially married.

A dowry is significant because it links two *oikoi* together. The dowry connects the bride to her new family because it is what allows a marriage to take place, but it also helps form a link

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<sup>77</sup> Rihll (2011): 52.

<sup>78</sup> Humphreys (1983): 72-3.

<sup>79</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 36.

back to her natal *oikos*.<sup>80</sup> The purpose of the dowry was to provide the girl with everything that she needs so she does not need to be supported financially in any other way.<sup>81</sup> The bride's family determined her dowry size in relation to living costs, proportion of the family's estate, and with respect to how many people the estate will be split up amongst.<sup>82</sup> A dowry was valued in cash, but consisted of cash as well as movable but noncash items.<sup>83</sup> Women were not allowed to own land in Athens, so land was not permitted to be part of a dowry.<sup>84</sup> A bride's financial budget was determined for her in negotiations of her father and her future husband. Solon, a lawmaker, determined that a bride was also permitted to have a small trousseau consisting of three dresses and other small items that were not valuable. This was the woman's personal property and would remain with her at the conclusion of the marriage.<sup>85</sup> However, if a marriage was ended due to death or divorce, the dowry had to be returned to the bride's natal family.<sup>86</sup> The dowry was what united two *oikoi* together.

A bride's dowry was also very influential in determining what kind of relationship the newly wed bride and groom would have. A large dowry gave a woman more power in the household; it ensured that her opinions would be considered and had clout in decisions regarding the household. It also helped stabilize the marriage and encouraged intimacy.<sup>87</sup> It is likely that a husband was more dedicated to his marriage and maintaining a bond with his wife if she had a large dowry because he wanted to ensure that he held onto her dowry as his property. A wife was able to abandon a marriage and get a divorce, so keeping a large dowry was motivation for a

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<sup>80</sup> Cohen (2000): 34.

<sup>81</sup> Golden (1990): 132.

<sup>82</sup> Golden (1990): 132.

<sup>83</sup> Cox (1998): 76.

<sup>84</sup> Pomeroy (1988): 1338.

<sup>85</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 63.

<sup>86</sup> Cox (1998): 75.

<sup>87</sup> Cox (1998): 69-70.

husband to focus on making his marriage successful. The dowry encouraged the couple to start expanding their *oikos* by having children, thus allowing their children to inherit what property they have together. This agency allowed the wife to have a higher social standing within the household. Slaves did not have any agency, which left them at the bottom of the household hierarchy.

Slaves and wives undergo two similar processes when they join a new *oikos*, renaming and a welcoming ceremony. When a slave joins a household, they are renamed as a way for the master to sever any natal ties the slave has. The master would rename the slave with a name that would denote negative character traits, the slave's place of origin, physical attributes, or characteristics owners wish for in their slaves.<sup>88</sup> The slave would be viewed as an object with the new name; the slave became a description of himself to the master. The master's renaming of the slave brought dishonor to the slave. On the other hand, women received a different name when they joined a household, but this name was not meant to dishonor the bride from her new *oikos*. The bride would now be recognized by her husband's name, as opposed to her previous recognition through her father's name. A slave and a wife both experienced a change of name that severed ties from their natal *oikos*, but these ties were severed for different reasons.

When a wife got married or a slave was newly purchased, a ceremony took place to welcome the newest members of the household to the *oikos*. As the bride or the slave entered the house, the newest member of the home would be showered with "dates, cakes, dried figs, and nuts... suggests that by their work both the bride and the slave were expected to bring prosperity and fruitfulness to their new household."<sup>89</sup> This ceremony was used as a good-luck charm to ensure that the newest member of the *oikos* would help increase the honor of their new home.

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<sup>88</sup> Wrenhaven (2012): 33-6.

<sup>89</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 71-2.

This ceremony, *katakhyismata*, was a tradition to welcome all new members into the household.<sup>90</sup> The husband would participate in this ceremony after the wedding, not as a new member of the *oikos*, but as a rite of passage into his new role as a husband. The shower of food served as an initiation ceremony welcoming the bride and a new slave into their new home and role.

The amount of duties a slave had within a household was dependent upon how many slaves was part of the *oikos*. Athenian households had a substantially smaller amount of slaves than Roman households, therefore Greek slaves did not have extremely specialized functions. In contrast, Roman households wanted to show off their wealth, so a master would own as many slaves as he could and assign each a specialized duty. In a Roman inscription, a finance officer of the Emperor Tiberius had sixteen slaves whose duties included being in charge of the wardrobe, the silver, the purchasing, a cook, a physician, and multiple attendants.<sup>91</sup> There is also no evidence that the work in the household was done solely by slaves; all members of the *oikos* participated in taking care of the *oikos*.<sup>92</sup> The number of slaves within a household also determined how much contact they would have with the family. An *oikos* with a small number of slaves were highly dependent on each slave, and these slaves more involved in the family's daily life.<sup>93</sup> A slave was assigned an extensive list of duties in an Athenian household such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, child-minding, assisting with the family business, delivering messages, guarding the door, and making clothes.<sup>94</sup> Slaves were expected to complete multiple jobs within the household.

Slaves also had the duty of ensuring a wife's chastity to help preserve the reputation of the *oikos*. This duty was given to the slaves by the male householder. Since the males

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<sup>90</sup> Cox (1998): 191n109.

<sup>91</sup> ILS 1514, trans. Wiedemann (1981): 123-4.

<sup>92</sup> Nevett (2005): 40.

<sup>93</sup> Golden (2011): 138

<sup>94</sup> Cox (1998): 191

determined the order and structure within society, it was determined socially acceptable for men not to be chaste. Both male and female slaves participated in activities that the women of the household were not allowed to do, which involved chores that required going outdoors and being seen by the public. Slaves would take over duties such as going into town to retrieve water or working in the household shop to ensure that the women would not gossip or have affairs.<sup>95</sup> Maintaining the women's chastity was of utmost importance, which was done by keeping the wife away from society's view, so slaves were considered to be a perfect alternative to complete these chores.

Some roles of slaves were specified to exist outside of the common household chores lists, even if the slave did not have proper training for the job. Such clearly defined roles included the *paidagogos* and the wet nurse. The *paidagogos* is defined to be a tutor and child-minder for young boys. The *paidagogos* only cared for boys because someone had to look after the child as he entered society. The father worked in the household shop, the mother was expected to remain indoors, so a slave was the only acceptable child-minder. Young girls remained inside the home with their mothers, so a *paidagogos* for a girl was unnecessary. The *paidagogos* escorted the boy everywhere, ensured that the boy would have desirable pederastic matches, and assisted in teaching school lessons.<sup>96</sup> This role was usually assigned to an older or injured slave that would be useless in physical labor. This slave's tasks included accompanying the child to school in the morning, being responsible for the child's well-being, and assisting the child in his studies.<sup>97</sup> A slave master realized that the *paidagogos* did not have a good education since the slave was not actually giving the education and often had this role out of circumstance. The *paidagogos* was often considered a "throw away" specialized job for a slave.

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<sup>95</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 21.

<sup>96</sup> Golden (1990): 60, 64.

<sup>97</sup> Cox (1998): 192.



The *paidagogos* often had an extremely close relationship with the child he looked after and therefore held a highly trusted role in the master's family. Herodotus notes the commander Themistocles uses his children's *paidagogos* as a messenger to lure the Persians into a trap at Salamis.<sup>98</sup> Themistocles either had great faith that his *paidagogos* would successfully deliver the message, or found that his *paidagogos* was more expendable than one of his soldiers. But in either scenario, Themistocles knew that the *paidagogos* would deliver the message and complete this mission, and prevent the message from getting into enemy hands.

However, the relationship between *paidagogos* and the family often fell short of this ideal: Aristotle taught that the *paidagogos* will act immorally around the child and fears that the child will pick up on these behaviors: "Tutors must supervise the children's pastimes, and in particular must see that they associate as little as possible with slaves. For children of this age... they may acquire a taint of illiberality from what they hear and see."<sup>99</sup> Aristotle warned that a child can become as small-minded and uncultured as a slave if the child spends too much time with their *paidagogos*. Plato notes that a *paidagogos*' and a child's intelligence and sophistication are on the same level; they both lack these traits, so he would not be considered the best role model for the child: "Nay, but the mixed type also is pleasing... and far most pleasing to boys and their tutors and the great mob is the opposite of your choice."<sup>100</sup> Plato believes that the immaturity of the slave would not be helpful in guiding a boy into adulthood. The parents feared what effect the *paidagogos* would have in shaping their child's future.

The relationship between a freeborn child and his slave *paidagogos* is based on a power inequality. A certain amount of power and control is given to the child; the child is also the slave's master and has been known to disobey and abuse their *paidagogos*. Even though slaves

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<sup>98</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*; trans. A. de Sélincourt 1954: 8.75

<sup>99</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 7.1336a40-b4; trans. H. Rackam 1944; [perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)

<sup>100</sup> Plato, *Republic* 3.397d; trans. P. Shorey 1969; [perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)

and children were considered to be property of the *oikos*, the child still had authority over the slave, and therefore had the ability to dishonor the slave.<sup>101</sup> The *paidagogos* had an awkward role within the household hierarchy since he had authority over the child, but the child had authority over the slave as the slave's master.

The role of the slave nurse had many duties that required her to be highly dependable. The nurse provided intimate care for children and the family: she generally nursed the child until the child was old enough to be passed on to the *paidagogos*. Similar to the *paidagogos*, nurses were another exception to the cultural dishonor of slaves in Athens; they were highly valued and honored since they took care of the master's children. Demosthenes describes taking in and caring for his childhood nurse:

“...An elderly woman who had been my nurse, a devoted soul and a faithful, who had been set free by my father. After she had been given her freedom through manumission she lived with her husband, but after his death, when she herself was an old woman and there was nobody to care for her, she came back to me. I could not suffer my old nurse, or the slave who attended me as a boy, to live in want.”<sup>102</sup>

This nurse rejoining the *oikos* demonstrates the flexibility of the boundaries of the *oikos* to accept an inferior into the household. Normally, other slaves that had been manumitted would not be allowed to rejoin the family, but since the nurse held such an important role in raising a child, the family viewed allowing her to live with her master family as socially acceptable. The dependability of the nurse allowed her to receive more honor than other slaves.

The same fears the family had regarding the *paidagogos* were also placed on the nurse. That masters were concerned about the trustworthiness of their slaves was a *topos* in Greek

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<sup>101</sup> Golden (1990): 160.

<sup>102</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Evergus and Mnesibulus* (47.55-6); trans. A. T. Murray 1939; perseus.tufts.edu.

tragedy: In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Phaedra, the wife of mythical Theseus falls in love with her stepson, Hippolytus, and reveals her incestuous desires to her nurse. Phaedra's nurse believes she can help Phaedra overcome her illness (love sickness) by revealing Phaedra's love to Hippolytus, but it results with Phaedra being so ashamed of her secret that she resolves the only way to end her agony is to commit suicide.<sup>103</sup> Nurses could also undermine the education of a child through the stories they tell; Plato notes that stories shape a child's soul and the child's intellectual future may be destroyed if storytelling is not done properly.<sup>104</sup>

“We must begin, then, it seems, by a censorship over our story-makers, and what they do well we must pass and what not, reject. And the stories on the accepted list we will induce nurses and mothers to tell to the children and so shape their souls by these stories far rather than their bodies by their hands. But most of the stories they now tell we must reject.”

The parents were also worried that the nurses would pass alcohol through their breast milk to the child.<sup>105</sup> Since these slaves are so involved in the daily lives of the master's family, it is understandable that the master and the family was cautiously watching and hoping that the slave did not succumb to their stereotypical traits of untrustworthiness, ignorance, and poor judgment because the slave's actions was so influential on the family's life. The nurse and *paidagogos* were valued, but this exception to all other slaves are not valued is due to these slaves taking on a maternal role of caring for the children.

The wife and slaves spent much time working together, because one of the main roles of a wife was to supervise the slaves. Many forms of Athenian vases depict the woman managing the household, where women and their maids are seen doing everyday tasks, such as the slave

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<sup>103</sup> Euripides, *Hippolytus* 595-596; trans. J. Morewood 1997: 55-56.

<sup>104</sup> Plato, *Republic* 2.377b-378; trans. P. Shorey 1969; perseus.tufts.edu.

<sup>105</sup> Golden (1990): 149.

caring for a child, or helping the woman get dressed.<sup>106</sup> Other iconographic evidence shows the female slaves tending to the wife's appearance, spinning and weaving, or playing musical instruments.<sup>107</sup> Xenophon notes that the wife was trusted by the husband to run the household herself: "I certainly do not spend time indoors, for my wife is more than capable of managing everything inside the house, even by herself."<sup>108</sup> Xenophon further notes that a good wife must establish a favorable relationship with the slaves, and that her work load is greater than the slaves since she has the responsibility and the knowledge to successfully run the household. If she has this knowledge, then she is considered to have a "masculine mind."<sup>109</sup> Having a wife with a masculine mind was considered to be the ultimate compliment.

A wife had to look over multiple domains while running the household. A diligent wife would act as the household manager by ensuring that the household stores were properly stocked. The household stores contained clothing, blankets, and food that would be stored for future months.<sup>110</sup> The wife had to monitor how much was produced within the household, how much was being consumed, and when they would need to restock again. She also had to be extremely watchful that slaves were not stealing from the household stores. The wife was the household manager.

Women did receive some help from the slaves in managing the *oikos*. The wife would choose a trustworthy slave and appoint them as a *tamia*, the slave housekeeper.<sup>111</sup> This slave would assist the wife in managing the household and also inform the wife of any misbehaving slaves. The household manager would reward the *tamia* and any other slaves who went above

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<sup>106</sup> Oakley (2000): 227-230

<sup>107</sup> Nevett (2005): 19.

<sup>108</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus VII.3*; trans. Pomeroy 1994; 139.

<sup>109</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 73.

<sup>110</sup> Nevett (2005): 14.

<sup>111</sup> Cox (1998): 130.

and beyond expectations with goods and food from the household. The woman did not manumit slaves as she did not have the power to do so.

The wife had a final duty within the household, which was to produce an heir. An *oikos* and a marriage was considered to be a success when an heir was produced that could carry on the family legacy.<sup>112</sup> The mother would look after the child along with the wet nurse, and as the child grew, the mother would receive assistance raising the child with another slave. The child would remain under the supervision of women until it was ready for more serious attention. If the child was a boy, the *paidagogos* would begin to look after the boy; if the child was a girl, she would begin to learn from her mother how to manage a household.<sup>113</sup> A girl would take lessons from her mother until she reached age 14, which was when the girl would be arranged to marry a man in his 30s and then had the responsibility of managing her own household.<sup>114</sup> It was customary for a mother to entrust the care of her children to a nurse and *paidagogos*.<sup>115</sup> A wife's main concern was birthing a child, but not raising it.

The architecture of an Athenian house was designed to control the subordinate members of the *oikos*. The main floor of the house had spatial organization so a woman could always keep an eye on slaves.<sup>116</sup> This design would ensure that slaves were not shirking their responsibilities and prevent unauthorized access to household stores. The main area of the household was also used for domestic production.<sup>117</sup> In these areas, food and clothing were prepared to put into the household stores for an extended period of time. Other items produced

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<sup>112</sup> Cox (1998): 133.

<sup>113</sup> Golden (1990): 123.

<sup>114</sup> Cox (1998): 170.

<sup>115</sup> Golden (1990): 83.

<sup>116</sup> Nevett (2005): 73.

<sup>117</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 30-31.

within the household could also be put on sale within the shop that existed at the front of the home.

Household slaves lived in the Athenian household, not in separate “slave quarters” as in the United States South, so they could be available to their master at a moment’s notice. Some slaves were known to sleep wherever they could: all around the colonnades, hallways, unused rooms.<sup>118</sup> Some slaves and their masters shared rooms (or were located in close proximity), a situation that produced comic tropes: Aristophanes’ comedy *Clouds* has the master Strepsiades complaining about how he has been prevented from sleeping due to his slave’s snoring.<sup>119</sup> Aristophanes is making fun of what could have been a common issue that masters had with sharing a room with their slaves. Household living was divided by gender, not by rank, so there existed the women’s quarters, *gynaikonitis*, and the men’s quarters, *andron*.<sup>120</sup> The *gynaikonitis* was frequently locked to prevent people from entering and having sexual relations with the women of the household or the slaves. This room was also locked because it was also used as a storeroom, so it is likely that the man of the household kept his valuable possessions stored in there, including his women.<sup>121</sup> The slaves were kept within the house so the master had more control over the slaves’ daily life.

The design of the house was created to maintain male honor and female shame to ensure that women were faithful.<sup>122</sup> By this design, there was only one door into the house, so women could not sneak out of the house to meet a lover. Similarly, in two story homes the *gynaikonitis* typically was on the second story to ensure that the women had no way of sneaking out of the

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<sup>118</sup> Cahill (2002): 151.

<sup>119</sup> Aristophanes, *Clouds*; trans. M. Hadas 1962: 103.

<sup>120</sup> Pomeroy (1997) 29-30.

<sup>121</sup> Pomeroy (1994) 292-293.

<sup>122</sup> Nevett (2005): 174.

house and destroying the integrity of the *oikos*.<sup>123</sup> In a single story home, the *gynaikonitis* would be located towards the back of the house, as far away from the street as possible. These rooms were remote by design to ensure that a stranger could not peer inside at the women.<sup>124</sup> Conveniently, this female space of the household was also closest to the cooking and washing areas, so a woman could always be close to her work.<sup>125</sup> Women would be able to withdraw into their rooms if anyone besides a male came over to the house.<sup>126</sup> Households were designed for the male head of household to protect his property.

## IX. Conclusion

As a sociologist, Orlando Patterson provides a new perspective on how to study slavery. Patterson focuses on the social interactions of people, rather than just what the laws prescribe what should happen. Doing history with a sociological method better enables classical scholars to read texts in new ways. Here, the texts written by male Athenians are prescriptive, explaining how men wanted their wives and slaves to function within the household. Using sociology to examine classics writings is a methodological advance because it allows the reader to determine what was prescribed and what was described in ancient writings. This new methodology allows a differentiation to be made between wives and slaves. Based on outmoded legal definitions of slavery, slaves and wives would both be viewed as property, but under social death, the distinction is clear. Wives and slaves clearly occupied different levels of power and status within the household hierarchy.

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<sup>123</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 29-30.

<sup>124</sup> Pomeroy (1975): 80.

<sup>125</sup> Golden (1990): 123.

<sup>126</sup> Pomeroy (1997): 30.

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